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ABSTRACT

The Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) Commission on Quality Standards and Enhancement of Teacher Education was commissioned in 1993 to study and disseminate information on the status and effectiveness of college/university-based preservice teacher education programs. This document summarizes the contents of the Commission's full report. The first section examines seven key areas of current teacher education programs, based in colleges or universities, in partnership with local schools. Section two addresses the impact on teacher education of the movement to enhance quality and strengthen accountability through the setting of performance, discipline, and current standards. The third section outlines 13 specific recommendations for action by the education community. These recommendations are based on three principles established by the Commission: (1) all teacher education programs should meet a high level of quality, well beyond minimum standards; (2) multiple types of evidence on the effectiveness of teacher education programs must be developed and maintained at the program, state, and national levels; and (3) an ongoing, targeted dissemination and public information plan is needed to promote the image and stature of teacher preparation. (ND)

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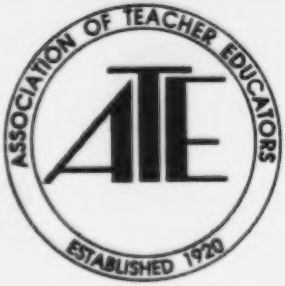

Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility in Teacher Education

A CALL TO ACTION

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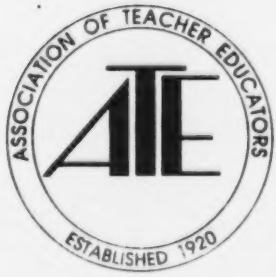

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Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility In Teacher Education: A Call to Action

Recommendations of the Association of Teacher Educators' Commission on Quality Standards and Enhancement of Teacher Education

Introduction

As each succeeding era of change in teacher education is defined, teacher educators and their professional colleagues have sought to respond to concerns about the quality of the content and process of teacher preparation. Documentation of the many changes that have occurred can be found in commission reports and studies issued nearly every decade since the late 1800s.

The Association of Teacher Educators' (ATE) Commission on Quality Standards and Enhancement of Teacher Education was commissioned by President Leonard Kaplan in 1993 to study and disseminate information on the status and effectiveness of college/university-based preservice teacher education programs, including a review of current and emerging indicators of quality. The following premises guided the activities of the Commission:

1. College/university teacher education programs, conducted in partnership with local schools, are vital to the economic, political and social welfare of the United States.
2. The strengths and positive contributions of preservice teacher education programs are not well known or well documented.
3. Criticisms of programs must be identified, tested, and addressed. Weaknesses identified through valid criticisms must be remediated.
4. Credibility is best achieved through documented quality of results and adequate visibility of this effectivness.
5. Greater credibility of programs will enhance the capacity of preservice teacher education. Possible benefits of increased credibility could be increased resources, decreased external regulation, enhanced ability to recruit highly qualified candidates, improved ability to attract outstanding faculty into teacher education, and greater probability of increasing program effectiveness.

Hearings held at the annual meetings of the Association of Teacher Educators and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and a review of the ground breaking work of those professionals in national commissions who preceded them informed the work of the Commission. In its final report, **Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility in Teacher Education: *A Call to Action,*** the Commission offers the teacher education community a set of guiding principles and purposes to document program effectiveness, link program efforts with state and national efforts and concerns, and communicate the results to the audiences for teacher education. This document summarizes the contents of the Commission's full report and provides the entire third section: *Strengthening Programs and Credibility: A Call to Action,* with its specific recommendations for action to the education community.

Summary of the Final Report

Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility in Teacher Education: *A Call to Action* describes the concerns expressed about the status and effectiveness of teacher preparation today. The report is divided into three sections. The first section analytically examines seven key areas where the public expects change to improve schooling for all students. These issue areas are viewed in the context of the development of the teacher education program as we know it today, based in a college or university, in partnership with local schools. The seven areas used to organize the existing data on teacher education as a status report on effectiveness and to propose a framework for future action are as follows:

- academic expectations for students in teacher education programs;
- relationship of the teacher education program to K-12: linking program content and student demographics to real world expectations;
- the usefulness of teacher education to new teachers;
- the relationship of the teacher education program to the university in which it exists;
- the contribution of extra-university sources of teachers to the workforce;
- the evaluation and external review of teacher education programs; and
- the public's view of schools.

Section II addresses the impact on teacher education of the movement to enhance quality and strengthen accountability through the setting of performance, discipline, and content standards, called the "era of standards." Noting that much of the inspiration of the standards movement emanates from dissatisfaction with current programs and a lack of credibility of teacher education as a whole, the Commission raises and responds to such questions as: "what are the generating forces of the standards movement;" "how do existing teacher education programs relate to these standards;" and "what promise does the standards movement hold for an improved quality and credibility of teacher education programs?"

Issues of concern regarding the standards movement that are presently unresolved for teacher education are highlighted in Section II of the Commission's report. These include: the systematic and reasonable linkage of different kinds of standards; the application of standards frameworks to both university and nontraditional teacher education programs; and the development and conduct of standards-based assessments. Appropriate assessment is emphasized as teacher education experiences a shift in the kind of evidence base needed to demonstrate competence of its graduates.

Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility in Teacher Education: *A Call to Action* shares the intention of the Flexner report, which stimulated introspection of the medical field through a status report, and as a result revolutionized the practice of medicine and medical education. The ATE Commission's quality standards report seeks to influence the reform and reculturation of teacher education. The Commission did this because it believes in the responsibility teacher education has to the equity of schooling: *To provide highly qualified teachers for all students.*

The Commission, mindful of the work that precedes this report, such as the papers commissioned for the 1995 National Congress on Teacher Education, and other articles and essays by educators and national groups like the NBPTS, INTASC, NASDTEC, TECSCU, and NCATE[1], intends the recommendations herein to be complementary. At the same time, the Commission's report is distinguished from the work of others by its decision not to target one area of teacher preparation for improvement, for example, the curriculum or the recruitment and retention of students from diverse backgrounds. Instead, the Commission is using a different language about teacher education, one of quality assurance.

Since the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1992, the public focus on assessment and program improvement in higher education (an internally controlled process) has shifted to that of accountability (an externally controlled process). This shift has been marked by (1) the establishment of standards for higher education institutions, (2) the development of state offices to conduct external reviews of institutions, (3) a movement to reinvent the nation's system of higher education accreditation, (4) an inquiry into the feasibility of measuring the higher order thinking skills of college graduates, and (5) new consumer reporting requirements. Since teacher education exists in a context of state authority, this accountability movement has relevance to the public scrutiny of teacher education. Teacher education exists primarily within institutions of higher education and is subject to the same scrutiny as other academic programs and departments. Teacher education's contribution can be strengthened by its setting and the support it receives from the institution in which it exists. Yet, we cannot forget that, more than ever, it is in the nexus of teacher education's relationship to the schools that the quality must be demonstrated. Accountability questions must ultimately be directed and answered through the evidence of teacher performance and student achievement. In other words, *good teachers lead to good students.*

The work of ATE, AACTE, and NCATE is recognized in enhancing a system of quality assurance. These efforts need to be leveraged for greater impact on policy issues, state systems, and individual program initiatives. Matching a current language of accountability with a set of responsible actions will require a different cultural perspective for teacher education. The Commission offers an integrated set of principles, purposes, and actions as a framework for establishing and maintaining the credibility of teacher preparation.

Strengthening Programs and Credibility: Principles, Purposes, and Recommended Actions

The Commission proposes 13 actions based on a set of three principles. Underlying each principle is a purpose or goal the Commission wishes to accomplish with these recommended actions. The principles are consistent with the aspirations espoused by many of the teacher education community representatives mentioned in this report. The purposes emerged from the hearings with the education community held by the Commission at ATE and AACTE

[1]National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

meetings over the past three years. The principles and associated purposes are described below.

Principle I. All teacher education programs should meet a high level of quality, well beyond minimum standards. A number of exemplary programs must exist as models. A strong system of standards and mechanisms for accountability must be in place as the foundation for achieving this level of quality.

Purpose A. Provide strategies to enhance and coordinate efforts to improve standards for teacher education programs. This includes the development of better evaluation mechanisms for strengthening programs as well as improved means of suspending or eliminating inadequate programs.

Principle II. Multiple types of evidence on the effectiveness of teacher education programs must be developed and maintained at the program, state, and national levels.

Purpose B. Raise the profession's consciousness about the need to provide evidence documenting program quality and to verify indicators of quality.

Principle III. An ongoing, targeted dissemination and public information plan is needed to promote the image and stature of teacher preparation.

Purpose C. Describe mechanisms for disseminating to specific audiences the evidence of quality to enhance the credibility and status of the profession.

The Commission proposes a series of actions to address the needs and concerns previously cited. The Commission believes the proposed actions must focus on strengthening programs through documentation of exemplary models on one hand, and a "quality-only, zero tolerance" stance to eliminate inadequate programs on the other.

The underlying premise of this call to action is that teacher education must make a concerted effort to enhance credibility. This can best be accomplished by achieving quality results and making the evidence of quality visible to appropriate constituents. This process is conceptualized in the formula: *Quality Results + Visibility = Credibility* (Roth, 1981). Although this may be an oversimplification, the formula conveys a cogent message that is operationalized by the **Call to Action.**

Recognizing that no one individual or organization can accomplish all efforts, the Commission urges the creation of an implementation group led by ATE and AACTE and in concert with other professional associations. The implementation group should be composed of a majority of teacher educators. It will determine its structure, timeline, decision-making processes, and continued membership as it undertakes the implementation of the recommendations in this report. In its deliberations, the implementation group should consider any relevant recommendations found in the work of current Commissions, such as the ATE Commissions on Teacher Educator Standards and Leadership in Interprofessional Education, and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Each of the proposed actions will be considered by the implementation group. The implementation group will assess the feasibility of the action, assign leadership responsibility, and propose steps for accomplishing each action.

Purpose A: Provide strategies to enhance and coordinate efforts to improve standards for teacher education programs. This includes the development of better evaluation mechanisms for strengthening programs as well as improved means of suspending or eliminating inadequate programs.

Proposed Actions:

1. Through national professional associations and funded projects, coordinate efforts to develop linkages among systems of standards. Within two years, state leaders, program directors and faculty, and national leaders will share a set of expectations for the outcomes of teacher education programs and their graduates. In addition, the expectations colleges/universities have for their graduates will match the expectations local schools have for their first-year teachers to provide reasonable consistency. This is of particular importance at the local level.

2. Exercise strong efforts to improve or eliminate weak programs. Teachers and teacher educators in schools and universities must make it clear they will not tolerate shoddy programs. State authorities must take seriously the admonition to "clean house" now. According to John Goodlad and other educational visionaries, universities must "face up to the moral imperative" and decide to conduct the enterprise properly or not at all. A "quality-only, zero tolerance" stance must be adopted. To accomplish this condition of quality, states, professional organizations, and standards groups should be encouraging strong institutional support to enhance capacity for all programs to meet high standards of quality.

   Issue a manifesto of quality which can be helpful to the public in its efforts to understand and identify quality teacher education programs. This manifesto should be signed by state authorities, including the Chiefs of each state, the professional standards boards, and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Urge the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), NCATE, and NASDTEC to continue their advocacy of rigorous program reviews. Through professional associations, encourage and assist institutions that seek program improvement through NCATE accreditation; as well as encourage participation in other quality networks, such as Goodlad's National Network for Education Renewal, Project 30, the Holmes Group, the Renaissance Group, and TECSCU, among others.

3. Provide for the convening of state leaders (to include policy makers, representatives of professional standards boards, state agency leaders) to design creative solutions to issues of accountability which concern the public and its legislative representatives. The convening of leaders should be done under the auspices of state-based associations such as NASBE, NASDTEC, and national organizations speaking for state legislative leaders, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Education Commission of the States and the National Governors Association. The goal is to sustain the public's attention to teacher education as a priority within public policy making.

4. Develop a national recognition program for model teacher education programs, similar to the Baldrige award, with leadership from the U.S. Department of Education. Such a program would identify essential themes of teacher preparation and then seek preparation programs that excel in incorporating these themes in conducting the work of educating teachers.

Purpose B: Raise the profession's consciousness about the need to provide evidence documenting program quality and to verify indicators of quality.

Proposed Actions:

1. Survey policy makers and other constituents to determine the evidence they would require to demonstrate the quality of teacher education graduates and programs. Identify the availability of data sources and compare to the evidence needed by different constituents for specific information and evaluation purposes.

2. Develop an evidence base at the program level which adequately describes its quality. This evidence would include the characteristics of teacher education candidates and document their effectiveness upon graduation and during the first years of teaching.

3. Develop a national clearinghouse to serve as a repository of quantitative and qualitative studies on teachers, teacher candidates, and schools of education. This national clearinghouse should be designed to hold data and offer technical assistance to institutional and national data collectors and users. The clearinghouse would promulgate standard data and effectiveness definitions to ensure the comparability of information about education programs across states.

   The clearinghouse should be prepared to offer institutions assistance in the design of instruments to evaluate effectiveness, to follow graduates, to survey schools to determine needs, perceptions, and satisfaction with programs, and to survey policy makers and other constituent groups to determine the evidence they would require to demonstrate quality. It should analyze data and develop policy-relevant reports to advise programs, institutions, and states of needs in policy areas.

Purpose C: Describe mechanisms for disseminating to specific audiences the evidence of quality to enhance the credibility and status of the profession.

Proposed Actions:

1. Identify the appropriate means to communicate effectively with key audiences.

2. Mobilize a united voice by engaging a variety of organizations in networks, coalitions, confederations, and issue-focused task forces to provide compelling cases for program quality. These organizations must include constituents representing departments and disciplines within higher education institutions and communities and local schools outside the higher education establishment, for example, parent teacher associations where the interests of the public are represented. These coalitions must take their case to the state and local policy makers on behalf of teacher education.

3. Support the findings and recommendations of the 1995 National Congress on Teacher Education. Urge state and local policy makers to carefully review the recommendations and action plans emerging from the 1995 National Congress in their decision-making processes about teacher preparation programs.

4. Develop a national declaration on program excellence seeking support from the diverse agencies involved in the preparation of teachers. Provide the declaration document to the public to demonstrate the ongoing cooperation within the profession towards a coherent set of standards and the development of a culture of evidence about the quality of teacher education programs.

5. Prepare a guidebook of strategies developed and tested by the U.S. Department of Education, by teacher education programs, and by national associations in teacher education to help institutions publicize their programs and to advise them in their efforts to ensure visibility and accountability.

6. Develop a public information campaign through collaborative efforts of professional associations and national educational organizations designed to tell the story of teacher education. The campaign must consider different audiences and their interests in teacher education and provide the evidence they are seeking to determine the responsibility, quality, and credibility of teacher education. The campaign will address teacher education program standards, showcase models, and spotlight effective leadership within the profession.

Summary

The intent of the Commission's work has been to bring a perspective to the ways in which program reform and quality can be supported, assessed, well-documented, and made visible to the public and to the profession. This perspective was developed by fairly representing the various critics and supporters of teacher education. The Commission's hope is that the implementation phase which follows the release of its report and recommendations will have a unifying effect on education for the nation's teachers and students.

This is a rather high expectation against which we must continually assess our progress. However, anything less would be insufficient. Teacher education is an integral part of the entire educational enterprise, and the lives of students are hanging in the balance. The risks and challenges are great; but so is the potential gain.

The Commission urges the proposed actions be addressed without delay.

Approved by the Association of Teacher Educators Delegate Assembly, February 1996

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Notes

The Association of Teacher Educators is the only national, individual membership association committed solely to the improvement of teacher education.

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